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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the debate on paradigms in educational administration and how this debate cannot be separated from the debate on the nature of the school. It asks questions about the extent to which recent challenges to traditional paradigms succeeded in changing the debate on the school as an organization. It supports arguments that the most serious challenge to any traditional science of education is to produce useful generalizations that explain particular social and organizational phenomena. It also claims that theorists in the field of educational administration always possess an underlying philosophy of the school as an organization. The essay offers an overview of various conceptions of the school community as gemeinschaft (community) and gesellschaft (society), emphasizing the theories of T.B. Greenfield, D.J. Willower, and C.W. Evers and G. Lakomski. The text focuses on the theory-ladeness of observations and societal and cultural influences on schooling. Overviews of organizational studies and the legal and ethical dimensions of the debate are also presented. The paper concludes that schools may be seen as an organizational and societal relationship because they rely on norms, purposes, values, professional socialization, collegiality, and natural independence and because the process of achieving the objectives of education guides schools' regulative activities. (Contains 16 references.) (RJM)

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The school as organization: challenges to traditional paradigms

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The earlier debate

During the 1970's and 1980's, perspectives on the school as an organization focused on views such as those of Greenfield, who argued that organizations should not be removed from the actions, feelings and objectives of people and that human action forms the foundation for the functioning of an organization. Greenfield makes the existence of an organization dependant on that which the participants from the broad community contribute to it. In contrast with the view of Greenfield, Griffiths argued that administration is the process that controls and directs the activities in a social organization such as the school. Griffiths therefore, in part, agreed with the Weberian model of a strict, impersonal hierarchical structure when he argues that managers should not work with individuals in the organization, but with groups or representatives of groups. In his later contributions to the field of educational administration, Griffiths, however, advocated a more thorough examination of the socio-cultural context of the school, as well as the role of women and minorities in the school as an organization.

In what is called by the author of this paper *challenges to traditional paradigms*, authors such as Evers and Lakomski propose a post-positivist stance with regard to educational administration which, inevitably will change traditional views on the school as an organization. Thomas Sergiovanni's (1994) contribution to this debate was that organizations such as schools are created by people, but over time become seperated from people. Sergiovanni uses the terms *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* to refer to schools. In *gemeinschaft*, individuals relate to each other without any tangible goal or benefit for any of the parties in the relationship. In *gesellschaft*, however, individuals relate to each other in order to reach some goal or to gain some benefit. The modern formal school should reflect *gemeinschaft*, according to Sergiovanni. Geijsel, Van den Berg & Sleegers (1995:292) describe the school as a learning organisation and construct a model in which transformational leadership is required. This perspective is in agreement with the *gemeinschaft* theory of Sergiovanni.

In this paper, an overview of the traditional viewpoints of Greenfield, Griffiths and Willower will be given as background, together with a historical perspective by Berg & Wallin. Berg & Wallin, some years ago, put the school in an organizational perspective that did not become part of the mainstream debate at the time.

The purpose of this paper is to show that the debate on paradigms in educational administration can not be seperated from the debate on the nature of the school. Questions are asked about the extent to which recent challenges to traditional paradigms succeeded in changing the debate on the school as an organization. The argument that the most serious challenge for any traditional science of educational administration that has claims to be relevant is to produce useful true generalizations that will enable the explanation, or even prediction, of particular social and organizational phenomena (Evers and Lakomski, 1996:3) is supported. A deliberate seperation of social and organizational aspects is, however, not supported. It will, furthermore, be argued that theorists in the field of educational administration always have an underlying (mostly hidden) philosophy on the school as an organization. This is in line with Willower's view (1996:165) that educational adminstration had a long, but chequered relationship with philosophy. It may seem senseless to make a contribution to the field of educational administration by arguing the organizational status of the school. It is, however, clear that the debate on the science of educational administration (or non-science according to Hodgkinson) is inevitably linked to the ontological question about what the school is (or is not). The gemeinschaft-theory seems to remove the school from its organizational constraints and "scientific-looking" structure into the safety of a community. Will this shift make the behaviour of the stakeholders in the school more difficult to predict because of its postmodernist nature? (cf. Evers and Lakomski, 1996:9).

TB Greenfield claims that, due to the school's unique character as an organization, it cannot therefore serve as a blueprint for an organization (in the universal sense). Greenfield shows a particular interest in human welfare within the organization. Man forms a focal point of interest and any hierarchies or conceptions which could adversely affect his position, are opposed. Thus any perception of man as part of a "system" (i.e. organization) is unacceptable. In contrast with this, Greenfield views human action and intention as basic to the functioning of an organization. The question arises as to whether Sergiovanni's *gemeinshaft* is a new concept or a revitalization of Greenfield.

Robbins (1984:43) points out that the sixties and seventies of this century were characterized by the emergence of a philosophy which foregrounded human relations in particular (the so-called "happiness" movement). The central point of

orientation was that people were inherently good and that the work area should be humanized. This school of thought includes the following characteristics:

- worker participation
- communal decision making
- faith in man's abilities
- the removal of external control measures
- moving away from prescription

Greenfield's reaction to the opinions of Griffiths is well documented. Griffiths had hesitated to join the new current of ideas stated above, which exhibited strong humanistic characteristics. To a certain extent, Greenfield's ideas about the role of **man** in the organization had not been new, but constituted an "integration" of ideas on the school as an organization into a movement which had by then already gained momentum.

Greenfield was clearly influenced by a humanistic current of ideas. For example, the organization as structure is seen as relative to the more essential attributes such as human abilities and needs.

The decisive and central position in which Greenfield situates man - a position from which he assesses his world (i.e. the organization within which he is) indicates a modern, specialized edition of Sartre's existentialist philosophical ideas. Human existence and attributing meaning to life (exposing the essential) according to the Sartre model, combine to form an important component of Greenfield's perception of man in the organization. Greenfield actually implies that the concept and definition of organization is not possible if human labour, thought and relationships have not yet developed to such an extent that they have resulted in the organization as structure. Greenfield was the first writer who systematically attacked the then relevant ideas on the nature of an organization (compare Husen, 1985:5247; Bates, 1988:10).

Greenfield's attack was epistomological by nature because it was directed against the logical-positivist ideas of writers such as Griffiths. Bates (1988:10) actually claims that Greenfield passed through three phases in a very short period of time (1974 - 1980). During the first phase his statements were issued from a phenomenological perspective, but his later ideas were mainly existentialist

philosophical which formed the basis of his philosophy and his final ideas exhibit strong characteristics of sociological interpretivism.

Greenfield acknowledges the existence of authority structures in an organization - he mentions order and authority as two aspects which are synonymous with the human existence.

On the surface, there seems to be a remarkable contradiction in the fact that Greenfield emphasizes the role of the individual as well as the implementation of a holistic work method in the training of managers. The fact that he makes organization an abstract of humanity, indicates that he regards society as a universal entity which provides guidelines or contours for the functioning of the school as an organization. The organization then functions within these guidelines, especially with regard to a value system. This may indicate a denial of man's unique ability of combining individual abilities and relationships in order to establish the organization as a structure.

The value of Greenfield's ideas with regard to the school as an organization are to be found in the following areas:

- Greenfield had perceived and advocated the role of values and norms in the school as organization.
- He highlighted the role of the individual which had been negated to a large extent in the organization.

Willower's contribution to organizational theory is situated in the fact that, instead of formulating a theory about the school as organization he has taken man's orientation towards reality as point of departure in the study of organizations. He therefore acknowledges the role of pre-scientific suppositions/hypotheses in the search for manifestations of reality.

Like Greenfield, Willower also advocates the idea of a contextual approach. The question remains however, whether Willower's stance does not become too pragmatic by ignoring the so-called "-isms" and focusing only on the particular context. Although Willower argues that science contains no dominant paradigm, he also claims at the same time that science is a human creation. Such a statement would only be possible from a specific paradigm, namely, logical positivism. This paradigm is continuously present in Willower's ideas

He places great emphasis on concrete, personal experience which indicates a positivist stance. Willower rejects subjectivism as it is propagated by Greenfield (1985:17). He furthermore criticizes Greenfield's dichotomous approach which is evident in his way of "looking at reality from two different perspectives" or his claim that "theoreticians recognize one of two stances towards organizations". For that reason, he classifies Greenfield as a relativist. It is, however, ironical that Willower's perception of man's orientation towards the world constitutes a sixfold dichotomous grouping of orientations. Willower himself, is then guilty of the criticism he directs at Greenfield.

On the whole, Willower follows an eclectic approach with regard to different perceptions on organizations and he never really arrives at a personal stance. He questions whether it is really necessary to be a phenomenologist, systems theoretician or whatever summarizes his position. He criticizes (1985:18) Marxists and Neo Marxists for importing ideology into the field of teacher administration and thereby ignoring empirical verification.

Willower's philosophy is made clear when he claims that teacher administration needs a philosophy which could accommodate a broad spectrum of ideas and methods (1985:19).

Berg and Wallin's (1981) absolutization of conflict in an organization is based on the Marxist model of the inevitable friction within any group of people in society.

The strict classification of levels (organization, communal and actor levels) leaves no space for interaction and for the influence of and on the levels. It rather indicates a compartmentalization - possibly to be able to better describe the role of conflict. The stance taken by these writers is that the school is a closed system.

Berg and Wallin's claim, that general organization theory is not applicable in the study of the school as organization, is valid. It corresponds, among others, to Greenfield's contextual approach.

The requirement posited by these writers, that the school as an organization can only be studied from another perspective than the school itself, is also unacceptable. An analysis of their description of the school shows that they have selected the social perspective as a basis of their study of the school. This is a denial of the complexity of the human existence and especially human co-existence.

As far as the role of authority and management is concerned, Berg and Wallin correctly point out that the school has little regard for the management training of people in positions of authority. The conflict which results between authority (on the communal level) and other levels would probably be the result of this situation.

It seems to be quite clear that analyses of educational administration by different authors revealed their views on the school as an organization. The following characteristics emerge to describe the particular nature of the school as an organization. The characteristics will be given in sequence to indicate the logical interdependence of the different aspects.

- The presence of people gives the school a character of communality.
- As a result of this communality, certain relationships exist.
- The result of the creation of relationships is that mutual arrangements are made (among others the authority rule) in terms of task divisions and the exercising of authority.
- The above-mentioned actions occur within a formal structure.

The later debate

Evers and Lakomski (1990:2) hold the view that educational administration has experienced a growing appreciation of the methodological weaknesses inherent in positivist construals of science and its methods. They reject positivism as false. They propose a post-positivist stance with regard to educational administration. Their arguments rest on the following two premises (1990:3):

- They acknowledge the importance theoretical writers in educational administration have attached to epistemology. They criticise the foundationalist epistemological assumptions embedded in traditional views on educational administration.
- They argue that recent criticisms of traditional administrative theory are just adding more foundations for knowledge to supplement the deficiencies of positivist science.

Through their definition of epistemology as part of philosophy dealing with questions concerning the nature of knowledge, what makes claims knowable and how they may be justified, they classify three major developments in epistemology, namely:

- **Logical empiricism**

  This development influenced educational administration in the sense that administration theory was seen as a classical hypothetico-deductive structure with laws at the top and facts at the bottom.

- **The paradigms approach**

  This development influenced educational administration theory in the sense that paradigms were compared and declared as either incommensurable, or unable to be compared or adjudicated.

- **The acknowledgement of the theory-ladenness of observation**

This development claims that the choice of theory needs to be guided by a consideration of the extra-empirical virtues possessed by theories.

Evers and Lakomski support the third viewpoint of educational administration (1990:10). They ask for a coherent or holistic epistemology of educational administration theory, which include aspects such as simplicity, consistency, coherence, comprehensiveness, conservativeness and fecundity.

Evers (1994) followed up on these views by constructing a model in which he proposes a perspective on educational administration theory which both coheres with natural science and all its explanatory resources, but is able to make use of natural language formulations of subjective understandings and all the practical utility they enjoy.

The main weakness of the theory proposed by Evers, is (by his own admittance) that the implications of this theory on the practice of educational administration are yet to be worked out.

In an attempt to improve the theory and practice of educational administration in the United States, the University Council for Educational Administration appointed a steering committee to map essential knowledge for educational leaders (Hoy, 1994:179). Several areas, relevant to this paper, were identified and highlighted as areas which needed further research. Some of these areas are:

Societal and cultural influences on schooling

A multicultural democratic approach in schools is proposed in which a universal set of values including respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, justice and fairness, and civic virtue and citizenship are found. The implication for educational

administration (and administrators) is that a theoretical and discourse framework, which addresses issues of racism, sexism and classism, needs to be developed.

Organisational studies

The following points emerged with regard to current trends and thought in the field of organisational studies:

* In the 1970's the field of educational administration found itself questioning the scientific bases on which it had attempted to build a theory of organisation.
* Contemporary organisational thought is eclectic. Mainline theories are challenged by critical theorists, feminist theorists and interpretivists.
* Two features of current research in the field is that there are large scale quantitative studies of educational effectiveness and qualitative studies of effective schools.
* One theory that is challenging conventional organisational theories, is the neo-Marxist approach to sociology.
* Postmodernism is also an emerging perspective on organisations. The existence of an independent and objective organisational reality that can be known through science, is rejected. Widely accepted stories or "grand narratives" are rather used to construct reality.
* Pragmatists argue that there are no rights or wrongs in describing organisational life, but if a problem is solved by any model, it was the right choice.

Legal and ethical dimensions

The fundamental concepts of school law in the United States are not derived from religious values, but from non-static aspects such as liberty, justice, equality, equity, equal protection, etc. The American people have been left without a robust moral language. One of the important questions in an organisational context arising from this, is in whose interest the school should act.

There is little doubt that the initial findings of the UCEA, will form the foundation for future thougt on educational administration theory. It is clear that a wider definition of theory is being used than that of existing paradigms. The elements of this theory are multi-faceted, and not restricted to one paradigm.

It is also clear that the UCEA dealt with the school as organization in passing. The school is seen as an entity influenced by society and culture. More emphasis was placed on the imputs from society to the school, than on the outputs from the school to the society. It can be argued that the UCEA saw the school as a (passive) organizational reality, stimulated and kept alive by society.

Regarding legal and ethical dimensions, the school is seen as the place (organization?) where values dear to the American people should be taught. Again, the school is not seen as defining its own role and acting on the same level as other organizations within society. The school is not seen as an organization, but as an organ (of the democratic state?).

Sergiovanni (1994) argued that the time has come to take a hard look at the basic theories and root metaphors that shape the way we understand schools and the way that we understand leadership and management within them.

Calling educational administration characterless, he asked that schools, as formal organisations, seek legitimacy by appearing "rational".

Sergiovanni (1994:216) holds the view that, although initially organizations are creatures of people, they tend over time to become seperated from people. This view corresponds with that of Greenfield.

The theory of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* was applied to schools by Sergiovanni (1994:218-219). In gemeinschaft, individuals relate to each other without any tangible goal or benefit for any of the parties in the relationship. In gesellschaft, however, individuals relate to each other to reach some goal or to gain some benefit.

The modern formal organisation is seen as gesellschaft. Relationships have been prescribed by roles and expectations. Policies, rules and protocols determine the nature of relationships. These relationships are also competitive. So called objectivity, rationality and self-interest are features of gesellschaft. Sergiovanni strongly argues for a move towards gemeinschaft in schools. The family and neighbourhood are examples of communities dominated by gemeinschaft values. What educational administration theory needs, according to Sergiovanni (1994:225), is that the root metaphor for schools be changed from organisation to community.

Hargreaves (1997:5), however, is of the opinion schools can serve communities, build community and be communities. A community is not a set of human ties and relationships bound in physical space any more. The opinion of Murphy (1995:4) that market principles are increasingly finding their way into the routines of school management, add another angle to the confusing debate on the nature of the school as organization. Van den Berg & Vandenberghe (1995:312) contribute to the debate by saying that individuality in the school had been over-emphasized. They ask for a balance between autonomy and collegiality in the school as an organization.

The question should be asked whether the time for polemics in educational administration is really ending, as Willower (1996:174) suggests. Can it really end before the nature of the school as an organization has been established? Should polemics in educational administration (or any scientific field of study) ever end?

The solution?

Did we complete the circle that began with structuralism and a focus on authority and other "market" concepts, moving gradually to a more social/humanistic perspective, then moving on and putting the school on a par with a community and then ending (beginning?) with the school as a market-orientated entity? Is it the correct approach to always describe the school in terms of other structures (markets, communities, etc.)?

The solution to the problem about the nature of the school as an organization, may be found in recognizing the fact that the school is both an organization and a societal relationship. The organizational aspect is found in many of the arguments about the school, while other arguments want to link the school to society (community?).

In summary, the school may be seen as an organization and a societal relationship for the following reasons:

- Schools rely on norms, purposes, values, professional socialization, collegiality, and natural interdependence.
- The process of achieving the objectives of education guides the regulative activities in the school, so that one can speak of purposiveness and striving together.

- In the course of regulating an activity in the school, more than one person is directly or indirectly involved, and in this way the communality in the school is given expression.
- Authority in the school has been clearly demarcated. Some individuals in a given situation are bearers of authority and others are subject to authority. In the classroom the teacher has authority over the pupils, while the principal has overall management authority.
- The activities in the school, however they be devided, cannot be compartmentalized. There is a bonding of the activities, in the sense that the management activities are subservient to the educational activities, and also facilitate them.
- Structures (including line and staff structures) are found in the school.
- In schools the tasks are circumscribed by way of central directives. In the school there is also a degree of differentiation in terms of the amount of accountability and responsibility that is allocated.
- There is a large degree of external influence in the school because it is determined by law that the parents should have a say in school affairs.
- The different activities are executed through the use of differentiated tasks and management actions.

From the above reasoning it thus emerges that the school is both a societal relationship *and* an organization. Because they share traits, such as authority structure, communality, structurality, living together, bonding and bondedness, it can be said that some organizations are also societal relationships. In this regard Kalsbeek (1979:199) has said:

> "We can therefore, in a differentiated society, such as we know now, distinguish different societal forms, such as states, churches, families, societies, business enterprises. There is no difference of opinion regarding this."

To this list can be added the school.

It becomes clear that the field of educational administration is still in the process of defining the role of the school as an organisation. Theorists in the field have not

yet found common ground with regard to the place of the different role-players in the school and about the nature of the school as an organization.

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